

THE

ALEX MURDAUGH

DEVIL

AND THE FALL OF

AT HIS

A SOUTHERN DYNASTY

ELBOW



VALERIE BAUERLEIN

**THE DEVIL AT HIS ELBOW**  
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**ALEX MURDAUGH AND THE  
FALL OF A SOUTHERN DYNASTY**

**VALERIE BAUERLEIN**



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*For Scott, Amelia, and Luke*

You can find meanness in the least of creatures, but when God made man the devil was at his elbow. A creature that can do anything.

—CORMAC MCCARTHY, *BLOOD MERIDIAN*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is a work of nonfiction, based on interviews conducted over several years with more than two hundred sources. Most sources spoke on the record, though some agreed to share information only on background. This held especially true for sources closest to the Murdaughs, given the sensitive nature of the case and the enduring influence of the family. The book is also based on hospital records, newspaper archives, and thousands of pages of court filings, including non-public depositions and exhibits. No scenes or details were invented. The dialogue and quotes are based on published accounts, were witnessed by the author, or were recounted to the author by credible sources. The author attended the six-week trial of Alex Murdaugh in Walterboro, South Carolina, and accompanied the jurors on their visit to Moselle, the hunting estate where Maggie and Paul Murdaugh were killed.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

### THE MURDAUGH FAMILY

#### THE PAST

**Randolph Murdaugh Sr. (1887–1940)** Alex's great-grandfather; founder of the *Murdaugh* law firm; Fourteenth Judicial Circuit Solicitor, 1920–1940

**Etta Harvey Murdaugh (1889–1918)** Alex's great-grandmother; Randolph's first wife and mother of Randolph Jr. and Johnny Glenn Murdaugh

**Estelle Marvin (1891–1937)** Randolph's second wife, a distant cousin

**Mary J. Taylor Hoffman (1900–1969)** Randolph's third wife, a divorcée

**Randolph “Buster” Murdaugh Jr. (1915–1998)** Alex's grandfather; partner at the family firm and Fourteenth Judicial Circuit Solicitor, 1940–1986

**Johnny Glenn Murdaugh (1918–1987)** Alex's uncle; Buster's younger brother

**Gladys Marvin Murdaugh (1916–1997)** Alex's grandmother; Buster's wife; grew up on Mackay Point Plantation

#### THE PRESENT

**Randolph Murdaugh III (1939–2021)** Alex's father; partner at the family firm and Fourteenth Judicial Circuit Solicitor, 1986–2006

**Elizabeth “Libby” Alexander Murdaugh (1939–2024)** Alex's mother; a longtime educator and school board member

**Richard Alexander “Alex” Murdaugh (1968–)** Disgraced lawyer, convicted murderer, and serial thief

**Margaret “Maggie” Branstetter Murdaugh (1968–2021)** Alex's college sweetheart and late wife

**Richard Alexander “Buster” Murdaugh Jr. (1996–)** Alex and Maggie's older son

**Paul Terry Murdaugh (1999–2021)** Alex and Maggie's late younger son

**Lynn Murdaugh Goettee (1963–)** Alex's older sister

**Randolph Murdaugh IV (1966–)** Alex's older brother and partner in the family firm

**John Marvin Murdaugh (1970–)** Alex's younger brother and owner of an equipment rental business

### ASSOCIATES, OTHER FAMILY, AND FRIENDS



## THE PAST

**Ruthven Vaux (1913–1983)** Buster's mistress, a socialite who accused him of stealing her divorce settlement

**Roberts Vaux (1945–)** Buster's illegitimate son and onetime assistant solicitor in his office

**Edith Thig pen (1912–2000)** Bootlegger's wife and key witness in the federal conspiracy case against Buster

**Alton Lig htsey (1906–1975)** Hampton County Sheriff from 1936 to 1951 and Murdaugh ally who came to see Buster as corrupt

**Barrett Boulware (1956–2018)** Alex's business partner; shrimper, accused drug smuggler, and former owner of Moselle

## THE PRESENT

**Russell Laffitte** Fourth-generation executive at Palmetto State Bank

**C ory Fleming** Alex's law school roommate and frequent co-counsel

**C hris Wilson** Alex's best friend and frequent co-counsel

## THE THEFTS

**Alania Plyler Spohn** Older of the two sisters whose mother and brother were killed in a 2005 wreck

**Hannah Plyler** Younger of the two sisters

**Pamela Pinckney** Driver in 2009 wreck in which she, her son, and her niece were critically injured

**Hakeem Pinckney (1990–2011)** Pamela's son, a deaf teenager who was rendered quadriplegic in the wreck and died two years later when his ventilator was left unplugged

**Natarsha Thomas** Pamela's niece whose eye was badly damaged in the wreck

**Arthur Badg er** Father of six, widowed when his wife was killed in a 2011 crash with a UPS truck

## THE DEATHS

### THE FALL

**Gloria Satterfield (1961–2018)** Longtime Murdaugh housekeeper, died three weeks after falling down the steps at Moselle

**Brian Harriott** Gloria's older son, a vulnerable adult

**Tony Satterfield** Gloria's younger son, an emergency room technician

**Ging er Hadwin** Gloria's younger sister and a classmate of Alex Murdaugh **Michael DeWitt J**

r. Longtime editor of *The Hampton County Guardian*

### THE ROAD

**Stephen Smith (1996–2015)** Nursing student killed and left in the middle of a country road

**Sandy Smith** Stephen's mother and advocate for solving his case

**Stephanie Smith** Stephen's twin sister

### THE BOAT WRECK

**Mallory Beach (1999–2019)** Killed when boat driven by Paul Murdaugh crashed into a bridge

**Anthony Cook** Mallory's boyfriend and Paul's childhood friend

**Connor Cook** Anthony's cousin, Paul's friend, and boyfriend of Miley Altman

**Miley Altman** Mallory's best friend and Connor's girlfriend

**Morgan Dougherty** Mallory's friend and Paul's girlfriend

**Renee Beach** Mallory's mother

**Phillip Beach** Mallory's father

**Beverly Cook** Anthony's mother

**Marty Cook** Connor's father

**Mark Tinsley Beach** family lawyer and onetime friend of Alex's

**Joe McCulloch** Lawyer for Connor

**Austin Pritcher** Rookie officer for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources who led the early investigation

### THE MURDERS AT MOSELLE

#### THE INVESTIGATION

**Daniel Greene** Colleton County sheriff's deputy and first officer on the scene

**Laura Rutland** Colleton County sheriff's detective and assistant homicide investigator

**David Owen** South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) agent and lead homicide investigator

**Jeff Croft** SLED agent and assistant homicide investigator

**Peter Rudofski** SLED agent who prepared eighty-eight-page timeline based on digital records

#### THE PROSECUTION

**Alan Wilson** S.C. Attorney General, a Republican who attended much of the trial

**Creighton Waters** Veteran white-collar prosecutor and the lead on the Murdaugh case

**ohn Meadors** Veteran violent-crime prosecutor  
recruited on the eve of the trial

#### **THE DEFENSE**

**Richard “Dick” Harpootlian** State senator, former prosecutor, and longtime criminal defense lawyer

**Jim Griffin** Former federal prosecutor and white-collar defense lawyer

#### **THE COURTROOM**

**The Hon. Clifton Newman** Judge overseeing all Murdaugh matters

**Rebecca “Becky” Hill** Colleton County Clerk of Court

**Nette Grant** Colleton County Sheriff’s Deputy and security for the Murdaugh family

#### **THE KEY WITNESSES**

**Blanca Turrubiate-Simpson** Murdaugh housekeeper and Maggie’s confidante

**Marian Proctor** Maggie’s older sister

**Mushelle “Shelley” Smith** Overnight caretaker for Libby Murdaugh, Alex’s mother

**Roger “Dale” Davis** Fed and cared for the dogs at Moselle

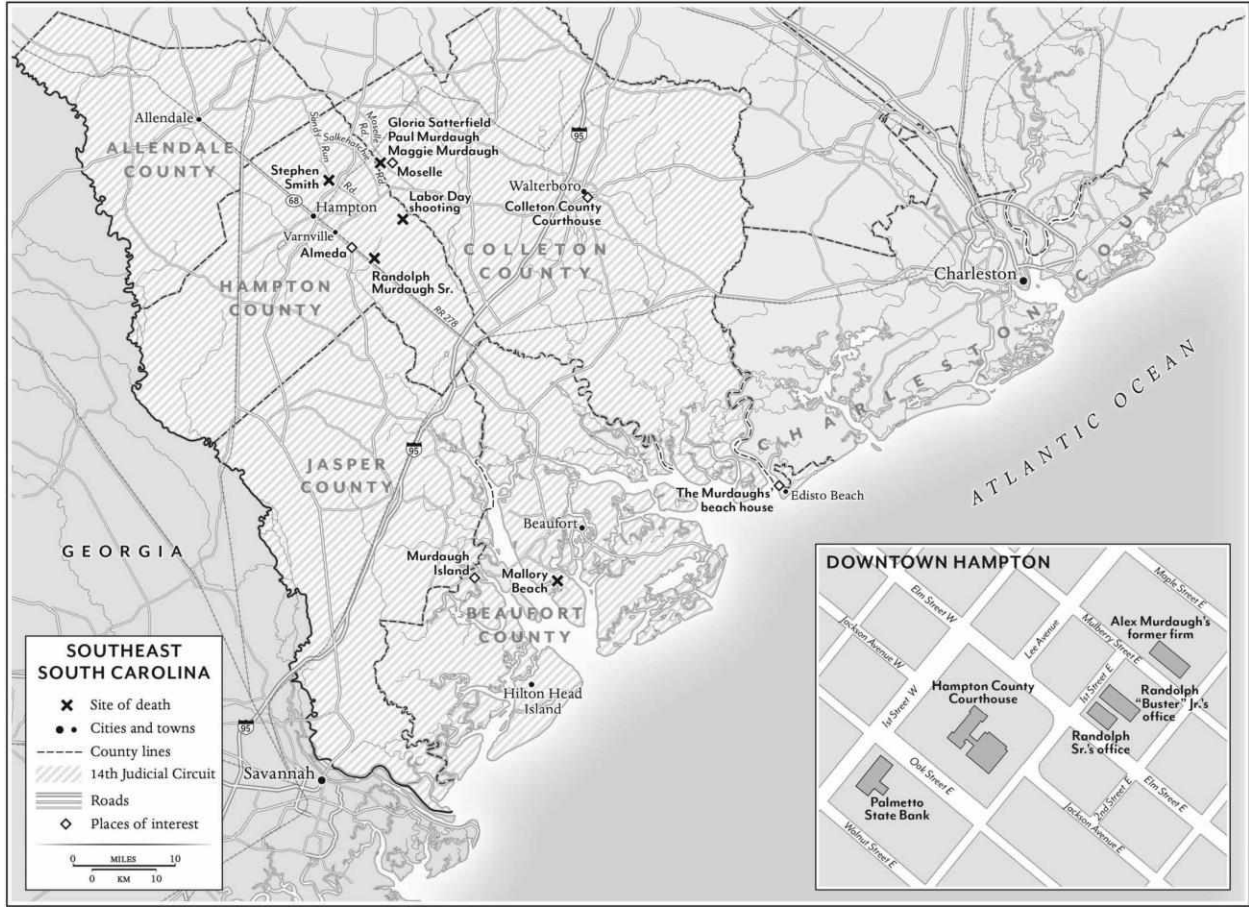
#### **THE JURORS**

**James McDowell** Alternate juror, a witness’s brother, added to the panel the last day

**Gwen Generette** Juror focused on kennel video

**Amie Williams** Payroll specialist who led the jury in prayer

**Craig Moyer** Carpenter who paid close attention to Alex’s shows of emotion



PART ONE

# THE PRINCE OF HAMPTON COUNTY

## CHAPTER ONE

The accused man sat in the same courtroom where he and his father and grandfather and great-grandfather had accused so many others, sending some to their death for crimes less heinous than the charges he faced. Alex Murdaugh had inherited his forebears' power and prowess and then squandered it, the work of a hundred years washed away in blood. At first, the deputies he'd known as friends exchanged pleasantries when they ferried him to and from jail. Now, several weeks into the trial, they tightened the cuffs a click more than necessary.

In Colleton County, a hardscrabble corner of South Carolina's Lowcountry, the courtroom had always been considered grand, with its mahogany benches and brass chandeliers suspended from a soaring ceiling. It had been designed by the same architect who created the Washington Monument and was crafted to instill a hushed sense of reverence. The front of the courtroom was dominated by a massive dark wood edifice; this was the judge's bench, but the term felt too paltry to describe the structure, which was

both imposing and bulletproof. On the wall behind the bench hung the state seal, the motto every child in the state memorized in school: DUM SPIRO SPERO.

*While I breathe, I hope.*

Portraits of stern-faced court officials, most of them long dead, gazed down from within gilded frames. One of the paintings, a rendering of Alex's legendary grandfather, had been taken down before the trial on the order of the judge, who did not want the jury to feel the old man's eyes upon them as they decided his grandson's fate. In the portrait's place, a pale rectangle remained on the wall, a hint of missing history.

The judge had been acquainted with Alex's grandfather and had been a contemporary of Alex's father decades earlier when they were fellow prosecutors. But it was Alex, the gregarious trial lawyer, whom the judge knew best. At least, the judge had thought so. After several weeks of testimony, the judge was no longer sure he had ever known the man at all.

In the early weeks of the trial, Alex kept up appearances, covering his shackles with a folded blazer, freshening his breath with Tic Tacs, trading fist bumps with the bailiffs, arranging for his family to bring him a John Grisham novel so he'd have something to read in his holding cell. Even on trial for his life, he treated the courtroom as his duchy. He whispered to his lawyers and smiled at the jurors and stared down the prosecutors as though he could will them into silence.

Some of the most damning testimony came from those who knew him best: his family's housekeeper, his wife's sister, another lawyer who had grown close to Alex and then recoiled after seeing the ruthlessness at his friend's core. Once the lawyer understood, he had vowed to force Alex to a reckoning.

To counter the damage, the defense team showed the jury a video of Alex's family singing at his birthday party barely a week before their world ended. Staring at the shimmering footage, Alex began to rock back and forth, his shoulders jerking, his jaw working furiously, a torrent of motion. Under their voices, his lawyers told him to tone it down.

"This fucking rocking," one muttered during a break. "It's like he's catatonic."

Then came the morning when Alex took the stand, defying his legal team's advice. As a veteran trial lawyer, he knew the risks of testifying on his own behalf. But the desire to tell his story was too strong. He was a Murdaugh. The lawyers in his family had spent decades shaping testimony to suit their needs, rearranging reality not just in court but in every square mile of their territory. It was his right to speak in this courtroom.

He put his hand on the Bible and swore to tell the truth, then settled into the witness box, adjusting the microphone for his height. The wooden chair beneath him creaked.

From an evidence box on the carpet, his lawyer picked up a shotgun.

"On June seventh, 2021, did you take this gun or any gun like it and shoot your son Paul in the chest in the feed room in your property off of Moselle Road?"

"No," Alex said. "I did not."

The lawyer held up the shotgun again.

“Did you take this gun, or any gun like it, and blow your son’s brains out on June seventh, or any day, or any time?” Alex squinted, his jaw working front to back.

“No,” he said, more emphatically. “I did not.”

The lawyer dropped the gun back into the evidence box with a thud that made spectators jump. Then he picked up a sleek black tactical rifle.

“Did you take a three-hundred-caliber Blackout, such as this, and fire it into your wife Maggie’s leg, torso, or any part of her body?” Alex nodded but said “No, I did not.”

“Did you shoot a three-hundred-caliber Blackout into her head, causing her death?”

“I didn’t shoot my wife or my son, any time, ever.” He nodded again. “I would never intentionally do anything to hurt either one of them, ever.”

The lawyer looked at his client. “Do you love Paul?”

“Did I love him? Like no other.”

“Do you love Maggie?”

“More than anything.”

Alex described that last summer evening with his family, sketching every detail so the jurors could see the picture in their minds. How he and Paul had ridden around the property together in the fading light. How they had inspected fields of corn and sunflowers, looked for signs of wild hogs, and picked up a pistol for a quick round of target practice. How Paul had laughed when Alex couldn’t make a sapling stand straight. They had returned to the house at dusk just as Maggie pulled up, he said. Their housekeeper had left them dinner on the stove, cube steak and rice and green beans, and they’d eaten quickly. Afterward Paul had gone down to the kennels to check on one of the dogs, and Maggie had gone with him. Alex said he had taken a nap, then gone to see his mother. When he returned to Moselle, he said, he had found them lying on the ground near the kennels.

As he tried to describe the blood and the stillness of the bodies, Alex began coughing and bobbing his chin toward his chest. For five seconds he was silent, then five seconds more. His face, always ruddy, was now fully flushed. His nose was running.

“It was so bad,” he said.

Another long pause, this time lasting nearly a minute. Alex twisted in his seat, seeming to look for something on the floor.

“Can I have some water?”

His lawyer passed him a bottle and Alex took a long drink.

For more than a year after that night, Alex had sworn to police that he had stayed at the house before leaving to check on his mother. Now, in court, he acknowledged that he had in fact joined his wife and son at the kennels for a few minutes before going to his mother’s house. Why, his lawyer asked, had he deceived investigators for so long?

Alex paused before answering. He had begun folding into himself.

“Oh,” he said finally with a shrug and a sigh, “what a tangled web we weave.”

During cross-examination, the lead prosecutor grilled Alex about his pattern of deceit. How he had lied to the first officer to arrive at the scene that night, and then to the captain who arrived soon after, and then to the two detectives who had tried to comfort him, patting his shoulder and offering words of condolence. He had lied to them all and even to his own attorneys about the truth of that night.

Alex stayed calm even as the prosecutor forced him to confirm all the other lies he’d told through the years, to his own family and to his closest friends and the clients who had counted on him. The quadriplegic deaf teenager from whom he had embezzled a million dollars. The young motherless sisters he had left destitute, one of them living out of her car. Had he felt entitled to betray their trust?

“No,” Alex said. He had found ways, he said, to live with his sins. He’d told himself he would pay the money back; he was only taking what he deserved; his clients would never miss it.

“To be able to look yourself in the mirror,” he said, “you lie to yourself.”

The prosecutor wanted to know how Alex had gotten these vulnerable people to trust him. Surely he had looked each of them in the eye as he stole their money.

“Correct?”

The witness had become visibly uncomfortable.

“Answer my question, yes or no,” said the prosecutor, “and then you can explain. I’ll let you explain all day long.” Alex said he had betrayed many people and regretted it.

The prosecutor cut him off. “I know, Mr. Murdaugh, that you would like for it just to be as simple as that. Just to say, ‘Yes, ladies and gentlemen, I stole money,’ and have that be the end of it.”

Again and again, the prosecutor hammered on Alex’s skills as a fabulist. He could lie convincingly and naturally, couldn’t he?

“Really that’s not for me to judge,” Alex said.

“That’s true,” said the prosecutor. He did not look toward the jury box. There was no need.

The twelve men and women charged with deciding the case studied the face of the accused. They were trying to understand if this man had truly been cold-blooded enough to gun down his wife and son at close range just after dinner on a warm summer evening.

All human beings are flawed and fragile, yes. But the longer Alex testified, the more the jurors wondered if they were in the presence of someone who existed outside expectation and restraint, beyond all boundaries. A man so practiced in pretending that he had become unknowable.

Some of the jurors suspected he was playing a part with them, too. By now they recognized his tells. His odd habit of nodding yes even as he said no. The extravagance of his explanations, like a child embroidering a story. The endless rocking and weeping.



He cried so hard, so often, that one juror offered a box of tissues. When Alex dabbed his eyes, the jurors seated closest to him, only a few feet away, looked at the crumpled tissues in his hand. The tissues were dry.

## CHAPTER TWO

By the time the trial was over, Alex Murdaugh had revealed himself as a hollow man, capable not just of annihilating his wife and son but of trying to pin the murders on others, defrauding his most vulnerable clients, betraying his law partners and his closest friends, deceiving even his family about almost every aspect of his life. The question that confounded so many was exactly how such a prosperous and respected citizen had come to lay ruin to the lives of everyone around him.

It's impossible to pinpoint the moment Alex Murdaugh's long spiral began. It could have been when he blew out his knee playing football at the University of South Carolina and started taking pills for the pain. Or in the years after, when he started taping little bags of oxycodone under his bed. Some who knew Alex, or believed they did, insisted that his addiction stories were exaggerated, a cover he used to distract attention from his real transgressions. They argue that the downfall began when Alex developed a habit of inventing legal expenses so he could make his clients pay for his family's groceries, vacations, and private school tuition. He'd lost millions in failed land investments during the housing bust, so maybe he'd fallen into a financial hole so deep that he couldn't climb out. It's possible that his work as a personal injury lawyer, dealing daily in the business of death—the more grievous the better—inured him to the suffering of others. Maybe the downfall began the day he first saw his son Paul, barely a teenager, sipping a beer and did not take it from him. Or maybe it was years later, on the foggy night when Paul drunkenly crashed the family's boat out on the marshes, throwing him and two of his friends into the dark water. Within the hour, Alex was racing to the hospital to help his son hide the truth.

The pills, the embezzling, the indulgence of his wayward son—all of these threads braided together to cast Alex into ruin.

Many versed in the history of Hampton County, South Carolina, would point out that the seeds of the fall were planted by three previous generations, besotted with power and stained by bloodshed. Sudden exits had haunted the Murdaughs for more than a century: suspicious accidents, unusual deaths, deaths that were faked, deaths rumored to be murders, death during childbirth, death on the battlefield, death during a quiet night at home, death by musket and shotgun and rifle, death by drowning, death on a dark road,

death by stairs. Long before Alex was born, lethal violence was woven into his family's story, along with chicanery and infidelity and enough hubris for several Greek tragedies.

Alex had his secrets. So did his forefathers. Alex's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather could make secrets disappear, and they had taught Alex to embrace the family ethos: To live above the law, you must become the law.

Hampton County, named for a Confederate general who had been one of the South's biggest slave owners, had never recovered from the Civil War, when Sherman's army marched through in two flanks and burned everything in sight. Hampton had been founded as a "white county," one where the vanquished could exist as if the South had never lost, away from the scrutiny of the outside world.

There, among the cypress trees and loblolly pines rising out of the ashes, the Murdaughs carved an isolated empire. For decades the family reigned as the region's chief prosecutors—solicitors, they were called—as well as the Lowcountry's most feared civil litigators, amassing power and wealth through a system of control that served as Alex's true inheritance. Through word and example, his forebears had taught him to tamper with juries and lean on judges and call in favors from governors. Inside Hampton and the other four counties of the state's Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, they decided right and wrong, defined the parameters of justice, and shifted those parameters at will. In those 3,300 square miles, they chose when to set free a violent criminal and when to send someone to the electric chair. Over the decades, external forces had threatened the family's autonomy many times: the railroads, the Depression, the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Justice. All of them battered the walls of the empire, and all were beaten back. The Murdaughs' authority had endured for so long it seemed inviolable, a way of being, like the Old South itself, with no beginning and no end. The family ruled on until Alex grew old enough to assume his rightful place in the succession.

Then came the day he made the choice to step away.

That decision to turn down the chance to become the circuit's next solicitor might have been the real trigger for Alex's collapse. Afterward, when people asked why, he would grin and say he was too busy making money at the family firm. What Alex didn't say was where much of that money was really coming from.

Alex's fall toppled his family's empire. And it shattered Hampton County's insistence that it was immune to progress.

In the long months before the trial, when he talked about what went wrong, Alex did not wax on about the go-along-to-get-along ways of the smalltown South or his family's century of dominance. But if he paused and allowed himself a moment of self-reflection, he might have allowed that the point of no return had arrived on a bright afternoon in the mid-2000s.

The day Alania Plyler, teetering on her crutches, hobbled into his life.

### CHAPTER THREE

The young girl lying awake and alone was used to figuring things out for herself. She'd spent weeks in intensive care after that terrible day on the highway, when the SUV spun out and flipped and took her mother and her big brother. Alania Plyler knew even then she needed someone to fight for her in court. Only twelve years old, she wanted a lawyer—a good one.

When she left the hospital after four weeks, Alania moved into a strange house with grandparents she barely knew and an indifferent and alcoholic father who was gone more than he was home. They made room for a hospital bed in the downstairs of the crowded house, and Alania lay there day and night, shifting now and then to relieve the pressure on her crushed shoulder, and on her arm, held together with steel, and on her right leg, broken in two places, and on her mangled left leg. Her body felt like one big cast. Her little sister was her caretaker, feeding her and wheeling her to the bathroom and back. She reminded herself she was not paralyzed. Her injuries, at least most of them, would heal. She believed in miracles.

She closed her eyes and, as she so often did, pictured her mother's face and how it had glowed as she died. Alania knew that the glow was her mother's soul, rising out of the wreckage and ascending to heaven, a last luminous gift from the woman who had been both her mama and her best friend. Whenever she conjured her mother's face, she saw the rest of the car, too. She saw herself trapped in the back seat of the Explorer as it stopped its awful rolling and careened into a stand of pines. Her mother had finally left her father twelve days before, and the TV they'd been returning to him smashed into Alania's left shoulder, pinning her. Her right side was jammed against the door, and the door was lodged against a tree. The front passenger seat collapsed into her lap along with the broken body of her fourteen-year-old brother, Justin. On the other side of the TV, she could hear her eight-year-old sister, Hannah, wriggling.

"Crawl out!" Alania shouted to her. "Run for help!"

Then Alania waited. She could not bear to look at her mother now that the light had left her, nor did she want to look down at her brother. She knew even then that there were things a child should never see. She looked instead out the shattered window, where she could see a flash in the tree branches. It was the fading sunlight reflecting off the CD she'd been listening to on her headphones before the Explorer's tire blew out. In her ears, Usher had been confessing his sins.

Alania and her sister had lost everything that day in July 2005, and while she made a plan for herself and her little sister, she encountered a lawyer who said all the right things. He reassured her over the phone, telling her time and again that what had happened to her family wasn't right. He said he would get justice for her mother and brother, and more money for her and her sister than they could ever spend. On the morning she was scheduled to meet with the lawyer in person for the first time, she walked outside on her crutches and lowered herself into the sedan he had sent just for her and then watched the pines rolling by outside the window as she was ushered a hundred miles into the Lowcountry.

When she reached the law firm where she was supposed to give her first deposition in the case, her lawyer stepped forward to meet her. He was tall and loud with red hair. Alania noticed that other adults stepped back from him when he got close, like they were scared of him, which gave her a strange sense of comfort. He reminded her of a bulldog. He told her he had a son close to her age. He promised that Alania and Hannah would prevail in the lawsuit he had already filed on the sisters' behalf against the companies responsible for the accident. He said he would make sure Alania and Hannah had a safe place to live, new clothes, and plenty of food. When they were old enough, they'd never have to work unless they wanted to. Alania's mother had worked two jobs, sometimes even a third, selling copies of *The State* newspaper on the side of the road. Money was always on Alania's mind, and the idea of having enough was exhilarating. This lawyer seemed like the type of person who would do exactly what he said he was going to do.

The lawyer told her that he was sure her father was a good man, but he wasn't capable of handling all the legal red tape. He had someone in mind to serve as a conservator for her and Hannah. It was best to have all the paperwork filed in Hampton County, he said, because he knew every single person at the courthouse as well as next door at the bank, and they would make sure it all went smoothly. He had lots of forms to show her and whisked them past her in a flash.

Years later, going through those forms, Alania noticed something strange. On the line for her mailing address, the man had written the address for her grandparents' house, where she and her sister were living. But on the line where it asked why the paperwork was being filed at the courthouse near his office, he had checked the box that said she was a resident of Hampton County.

The lawyer had sworn to protect Alania and her sister. He called her Lainey, the nickname her mother had given her.

"I am going to make this right, Lainey," Mr. Alex said. That's what he'd said she should call him. "You can trust me."

—

WHEN HE MET Alania Plyler, Alex Murdaugh radiated the confidence of a man at the peak of his career.

On the cusp of forty, he was already one of South Carolina's most powerful trial attorneys, assuming the mantle passed down by his forefathers. His reputation for winning eye-popping verdicts from hometown juries was so established that most of the corporations he sued—or at least, their insurance companies—preferred to settle out of court. He could turn a case worth \$100,000 in any other county into a \$1 million case in Hampton, just by virtue of who he was. When he wasn't working his caseload, Alex hosted political fundraisers on his family's island compound, offered his counsel to governors and senators, and practiced his homespun charm inside the corridors of the state legislature in Columbia.